

Tape #172

DICK GILBERT

Interviewed by William Jolley, October 22, 1985

Transcribed by Marilyn Hunting, June 12, 2001

William Jolley (WJ): Tell me about the Dyer Mine. Tell me about Mr. Dyer.

Dick Gilbert (Dick): One fall when the winter came early, Grandfather Pope had to bring down his son to school, so he said, "Mr. Dyer, we're going down to school and we will stay in Vernal all winter then we'll come back to the mine in the spring." Mr. Dyer said, "Well, I'll stay here all winter." Grandfather looked around and said, "Well, Mr. Dyer, you don't have enough food to keep you here all winter, not near enough food." Mr. Dyer said, "Oh, I can make it. I'll stay right here on the lawn. Deer, game I can kill."

Grandfather knew that he didn't have enough food, so just before Thanksgiving he started for the mine. He rode his horse as far up Steinaker Draw as he could go on a horse and on over to Brush Creek and then he went on snowshoes from there on up to the mine. When he got to the mine, he talked to Mr. Dyer and wanted him to come to Vernal and he didn't want to do it. He stayed all night at the mine and tried to talk Mr. Dyer into coming to Vernal. Mr. Dyer said, "I'm just too old to make the trip, I can't make that trip on skis."

"Well, Mr. Dyer, let's get you on these skis and we will go to first hill and we'll coast you down, and if you don't feel that you can make it when we go a little ways, I will bring you back."

So he coaxed him down to halfway and then he told him he was halfway and he could go either way [he] wanted to. The snow was real deep that winter.

My grandfather told me Mr. Dyer came in here with the Andicott Copper Company. He proved up on the mine and then came to Vernal and said, "Who can I get that is a good mine man?" And they said, "Richard Pope is the best mine man in this country." So Mr. Dyer said to my grandfather, "I'm here in behalf of the Andicott Copper Company and will you work for us?" And Grandfather said, "Yes." He said, "I want you to open the mine up and be superintendent." Mr. Dyer was Gunderson's superintendent, but he wanted my grandfather to be his superintendent.

When they went to shut down the mine, the copper began to diminish in quantity so he ... The cash wouldn't come in from Andicott, in Montana, so they finally had to shut down the mine because the cash just didn't come in. It wasn't because Dyer quit, I think it was because Andicott didn't send the checks to pay the men off. That and they were out of copper.

WJ: Tell me about the towns around it. I've heard of Boullionville.

Dick: Have you ever been to Boullionville? Boullionville. You follow the road that goes on across the mountain. Red Cloud Loop Road. Boullionville is several miles on past Iron Springs going west. You can still see where the old CCC camps were in there. That was Boullionville. That was before Dyer Mine.

WJ: I have also heard of Anderson Creek.

Dick: That was where the old smelter was located. Now there are pictures of the old smelter over in the Old Age Center. My grandfather was also charge of building that smelter.

WJ: How did he get the smokestack up there?

Dick: I don't know. Ralph Siddoway told me he can't imagine how he ever got it up there. They would haul that ore from the mine over to the smelter. All they smelted was the lowest grade; the high grade they hauled out.

WJ: Do you know the percentage? I don't know, it wasn't very high. I'll tell you what happened. If you know Leland Stevenson in Roosevelt, his father-in-law worked for my grandfather at the Dyer Mine. He hauled ore from the Dyer over to the railhead in Carter, Wyoming. His father-in-law wanted to go back over that road just a few years, no more than ten years, ago. Leland purchased a brand new Jeep, a CJ5 brand Jeep, started down this old road. Leland said there were pieces of copper, what he considered nearly pure copper, just off the Y, and they couldn't lift them back on, they couldn't lift them in the Jeep. They were that big. They dropped off the wagon and there they sat.

He said the road was so they had to build a road to get down the road. They couldn't come back up the mountain, they had to go back. It took them three or four days to go over that old road on down through Young's Springs dugway and down in that country. That was the government military road that went down to Fort Thornburg. It was all washed out by that time. Leland said they were really big chunks of copper, too big for them to get them out.

There was a little town, I've been right to it. I don't know what they called it. I suppose it was just a Dyer camp. There were several log cabins to the east and a little bit south of the Dyer. Then George Pope opened up the Big Four down in there. If you go up there sometime, you will find holes in the ground all over the place where they have dug down. George Pope dug down; he never did find anything. John Pope figured the copper always come up from the bottom. He figured it was molten copper down underneath the ground and forced up by gas. The Dyer copper was in large pockets, it was softer. There were two pockets in there. One was worth five hundred thousand dollars and the other was worth two hundred and fifty dollars. Now in that time, it was a fortune.

WJ: George Pope, he a relative of yours?

Dick: He and my grandfather were brothers. George probably worked up to the Dyer Mine off and on. He and his daughter bought the Dyer property. They owned it until the last few years and I think Hattie's nieces and nephews still own the property. George Pope's nieces and nephews owned the actual mine and the Big Four. They are just down from the Dyer, just another name for a little mine. That is where George mined. He tried to find more copper and the biggest I've ever seen was about the size of your hand, just small chunks. 'Course the big one, it was nearly solid pure copper.

WJ: Do you think there is still copper up there?

Dick: They tell me if you could dig down, you would find some big chunks, big saucers-shaped

pieces. It wouldn't be worth it, too expensive.

WJ: Someone was telling me they brought a lot of silver and gold out of that too.

Dick: Yes. There was enough silver and gold mined in the Dyer Mine to pay for the handling of all the copper. The copper made the money, but there was enough silver and gold to pay for the handling of the copper, to pay for men's wages and things like that. There was enough for the operation expenses of the mine.

WJ: Do you remember anything about the people?

Dick: No. I didn't ever know my grandfather, he died when I was one years old. My grandmother told me the stories. My grandmother raised me. My mother died when I was two years old. The flu epidemic killed my mother, 1918.

As you go up the mountain and look on the east side of the road, you can see where the wagon tracks are. You can see the wagon tracks yet. Probably seventy-five-, eighty-, one hundred-year-old wagon tracks. That's kind of where the power line goes.

WJ: Tell me about you. What is the biggest change in the valley you've seen?

Dick: Paved roads. I can remember when Vernal's Main Street in the spring was a bog hole. I remember when right in the middle of town was a bog. It would get wet in the spring and you could hardly walk across the street. I was just a little kid. I don't remember when they paved it.

WJ: Did you go to Central School? Tell me about Central School. Who was the principal?

Dick: John McNaughton was principal. John Stagg was my teacher in the sixth grade. Teachers, I had Anna Smith, George Johnston's, wife. I had a Miss King. Iris White, Ray White's sister, John Sidewell. Went to Uintah Jr. High, next to the old Uintah High School.

WJ: When I went to Jr. High they had just finished the new Jr. High on First South. I remember during the summer before I went into Jr. High going in the old building. They had band practice in there because they hadn't quite finished up the new band room in the new Jr. High. Which is now the Middle School. Did you go on to a trade school or something?

Dick: No, I worked for Newton Brothers. [Newton's was at about 18 South Vernal Avenue. They were looking at a picture.] Did you ever dance in the old Imperial Hall?

WJ: Tell me more about the Dyer Mine, that's interesting. Your grandfather was the foreman.

Dick: They lived in the cabin right next to the mine, that was their cabin. I don't know how many people they employed there. I don't know how they got it out, maybe dynamite, pick and shovels, wheelbarrow. There's some of those old ore cars around here now that they used in the Dyer Mine. Drive around the valley and you will see some of those old ore cars.

My grandfather was sheriff after the Dyer Mine closed. He was deputy to John for a long

time. You see John T. Pope was one of the earliest sheriffs here. The way John T. became sheriff is interesting. He was in town one day and somebody stole a horse. They said, "John, you go after him." John went after him and when he got back they pinned a badge on him and said, "You're sheriff, John." The Popes were people that believed in public service. They did a lot for this country.

When the Dyer Mine closed up, Mr. Dyer left the country. He was a mining engineer.

Do you know how long I served as LDS Church sound technician here in this valley? Fifty years. This is interesting. The way I got into that was through Hugh Colton and Harmon Sowards. They bought A.A. ? for the Imperial Hall, the old dance hall. They came down home one night and they asked, "Will you take of it for us?" So I did and that is the way I got into doing church sounds.

I had the first electric plating plant in this area. I plated thousands of pieces, cadmium plate, electric-plated piece of cadmium for horns on saddles. I set it up for Standard Saddle Tree and for Newton Brothers, electric saddle tree plating. If I've made one ring, I have made a million rings, rings for cinches and other things, anywhere from an inch and a half to three inches in diameter – number two, double ought (00) wire. 00 wire is about 3/8 inch in diameter.

WJ: More documentation. [Referring to information Gilbert handed to him.]

Dick: That's when my grandfather's job terminated, and not until.

WJ: It says here that Mr. Lansbury took your grandfather's place, but that's not right then, huh? Mr. Rock Pope left when your grandfather left, huh?

Dick: Yeah. The mine closed down. Dyer left and the whole bunch left at that time. Dyer may have left a little before, I don't know. But I do know Dyer was a mining engineer for Andicott and searched this country over for a mining claim. He found the mine he claimed and he come to Vernal and wanted to know who would be able to open up the mine and they said, "Richard Pope is the best mining man in this entire area. Get him." Now Dyer may have left a little before, I guess. These other fellows came in after the mine was closed down.

WJ: Oh, so they closed down the mine and this Mr. Lansbury tried to open it up again?

Dick: Let me tell you something about the Dyer. There has been several people tried to open up the Dyer Mine. For instance, Briant Roper, up here. He tried to open up the Dyer Mine. Jerry Pope tried after it was closed. There has been a lot of money spent on the Dyer Mine thinking surely they would find some more copper if they could open it up again. But they never have. They will never find any more copper. Little tiny pots they may have dug out maybe some one hundred pounds, maybe a ton or two, but there has never been anyone to open up the mine for an operating thing. ? was the first one to open up and they took out the two big pockets, the one pockets was around 250 feet around.

WJ: [Reading] Mr. Jason Cooms actually possessed the mine, wrote to our R.M. Pope, practical mining engineer, who had been working at the mine and asked him to dress it up for sale in the

spring.

Dick: That was after the mine was shut down. It had to be. My grandfather was the one who closed the mine; closed it for Andicott Copper.